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# Letter dated 16 July 2013 from the Permanent Representatives of Austria, Poland and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey to you on behalf of Austria, Poland and Switzerland, and through you to the esteemed members of the Security Council, the recommendations elaborated on the basis of the international conference on "The Safety of Journalists — Current Challenges", which took place in Warsaw on 23 and 24 April 2013 (see annex). The conference was organized in cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, the Embassy of Austria and the Embassy of Switzerland to Poland. The conference was attended by the representatives of international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, national governments, civil society, the media and academia. The recommendations of the meeting were prepared by the co-hosts of the conference, Austria, Poland and Switzerland, in close cooperation with the conference participants.

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Martin **Sajdik**
Permanent Representative of Austria
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Ryszard **Sarkowicz**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Paul **Seger**
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the United Nations

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## Annex to the letter dated 16 July 2013 from the Permanent Representatives of Austria, Poland and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

## Recommendations of the international conference on "The Safety of Journalists — Current Challenges"

**Warsaw, 23 and 24 April 2013**

**How to improve the safety of journalists**

On 23 to 24 April 2013 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, in cooperation with the Embassy of Switzerland and the Embassy of Austria in Warsaw, organized an international conference on the safety of journalists. Among the participants were State representatives, representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), journalists and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The discussions led to the following recommendations to improve the safety of journalists:

1. Governments at the national, regional and local levels should fulfil their duty to ensure the protection of human rights of everyone, without distinction of any kind. They should promote freedom of expression as a cornerstone of democratic societies and recognize the key role of journalists therein.

2. International institutions and Governments should condemn attacks against journalists and violations of their rights. International institutions and Governments should call on all relevant actors to comply with existing standards on the protection of journalists.

3. Governments at the national, regional and local levels, international organizations, civil society and media organizations should foster dialogue and cooperation in order to ensure the protection of the freedom of expression and information and in particular the safety of journalists. In this context, international cooperation between ombudsman institutions and national human rights institutions plays an important role and should be encouraged.

4. Authorities should provide conditions for a safe media environment to enable journalists to perform their work independently and without any interference by, inter alia, strengthening national legal frameworks in this regard and by implementing such frameworks. They should publicly contest attempts to silence critical voices and raise awareness regarding the crucial role of journalists and the media for societies based on the rule of law.

5. Authorities should ensure the necessary protection of journalists and their families. All cases of violence against journalists should be investigated, and the perpetrators of crimes against journalists must be brought to justice. Every effort has to be made to end the impunity of perpetrators. Therefore law enforcement bodies and the judiciary should be trained to effectively and promptly investigate violations of the freedom of the media and to conduct the respective proceedings.

6. The protection of journalists should cover all news providers, both professional and non-professional, as well as journalistic sources and it should not

only extend to times of conflict, but also to times of peace. Further consideration should be given to the issue of the definition of a journalist.

7. Further efforts should be made to improve the existing monitoring mechanisms, to encourage their close cooperation and to develop a specific international monitoring mechanism for the safety of journalists. Better cooperation and coordination among various international, regional and local actors, including in effective early warning mechanisms, should be ensured.

8. Governments should ensure full cooperation with existing human rights protection mechanisms, in particular with special rapporteurs and representatives, who play a crucial role in promoting freedom of expression, as well as with UNESCO, which has a leading role within the United Nations system in this regard. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions should be encouraged to continue addressing the issue of the safety of journalists in their work.

9. Governments need to work towards improved access to the Internet, particularly in the developing world. Developed countries should continue to support these efforts. Measures to expand Internet access, openness and resilience to address censorship or mass surveillance by communication technology should be promoted.

10. The national legal frameworks on the freedom of expression online and offline should be strengthened. Internet regulatory solutions, reflecting international standards, should be introduced in an open and transparent manner and cover human rights aspects. Internet security should not in any way hamper or adversely affect the realization of the freedom of expression.

11. Special training on all aspects of safety, including on how to obtain assistance nationally and internationally, should be provided for journalists and supported by media organizations and enterprises. The international community should assist in this process, where necessary.